DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 549 CS 207 677

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TITLE A Study of Interviewing, Personality and Bias: The Assessment of a Political Incident by High School Journalists.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (66th, Corvallis, OR, August 6-9, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attribution Theory; *Bias; Communication Skills; Human Relations; Interpersonal Communication; *Interviews; *Journalism Education; Media Research; *Personality Traits; Secondary Education; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Self Monitoring

ABSTRACT

If greater self-monitoring can lead to greater awareness of the characteristics of others, self-monitoring should be positively related to personality attributions and negatively related to situational attributions. To compare the relationship between self-monitoring and attributions when gaining information through social interactions and through reading only, high school journalism students were asked to complete a self-monitoring scale and were assigned to either a control or an experimental group. Control students received printed information from three sources on an incident occurring at another high school, and experimental students were instructed to interview these sources about the incident. After writing stories on the incident, students from both groups filled out questionnaires designed to determine the extent to which they saw personality attributes or situational factors as causing the incident. Results indicated that students who were higher in self-monitoring were generally better interviewers but were more likely to make attributions that were biased. (Appendixes include questions used to make up the self-monitoring scale and handouts given to the control group.) (HOD)

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A Study of Interviewing, Personality and Bias: The Assessment of a Political Incident by High School Journalists

by

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Presented to the Secondary Education Division of AEJMC at the August, 1983 convention. The author would like to thank Mary Benedict for her support of the project, and for helping to incorporate the project into the High School Journalism Institute. The author would also like to thank Judy Ruch for her assistance in planning and carrying out the experiment as well as her help in preparing the data. The author would also like to thank the teachers in the High School Journalism Institute whose classes participated in the experiment: Dennis Cripe, Janice Dean, Sue Lafky, Audrey Mathison, Jim Ray and John Reque. Barbara Fredin supported the project at every step. Chip Drake, Fred Fico, Barbara Fredin, Ronald Reason, Mary Alice Sentman, Lori Wildman, Tony Willis helped in carrying out the experiment.

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Introduction

Interviewing is an art which is central to journalism, but is extremely difficult to teach. It is difficult to observe students conducting interviews. The very act of observing an interview may well change the quality of the interview. It is also a mammoth task to have each student interview his teacher, and may not be a particularly realistic exercise.

In many ways, interviewing is an intimate activity that is very much bound up in the personality of both the interviewer and the source. Bascially, each person must develop his own interviewing style. It is difficult, therefore, to make general comments about interviewing; what applies to one student may not apply to another. The personal aspect of interviewing may also be a reason why excellent texts such as Metzler (1977) often make sense to students only after they have had experience conducting interviews. Differences in personalities pose another challenge. Discussing how to use personality traits often can become touchy because teachers frequently must tell a student that he or she is manipulative, or perhaps not manipulative enough. Even so, it can be difficult to say exactly how being manipulative in some way affects the interview. Part of the problem is that little is known in any systematic fashion about the relationships between personal traits and the the kinds of knowledge and understanding gained during interviews, although anecdotal evidence certainly exists.

It seems clear that a good interviewer must be sensitive to others. He must also be somewhat manipulative. He must be able to adjust his own actions to help him understand his source and to

gain better information. A good interviewer is almost constantly monitoring and adjusting his behavior in light of clues from his sources. In this way a good reporter should come to a more sophisticated understanding of his sources. It may be, however, that this capacity for manipulation also leads to certain biases when a reporter is trying to understand why sources have taken particular actions. The possibility of such a relationship will be explored in this paper. The information could be used to help students understand themselves, and to help students understand difficulties they might have in assessing the characteristics and actions of their sources.

One personality trait that could be particularly important in assessing the interviewing and reporting skills of beginning reporters is self-monitoring. The concept of self-monitoring has been elaborated by Snyder (1974) who also devised a scale to measure it. Overall, a person who monitors himself carefully will act differently in different situations, much more so than a person who does not monitor his own actions carefully. Snyder sees self-monitoring as having several facets. A person who engages in self-monitoring is concerned with the social appropriateness of his self presentation, is attentive to the social actions of others in order to gain clues on how to behave, and is capable of controlling and modifying his own expression.

Snyder's concept of self-monitoring seems particularly useful for the understanding of a good interviewer because it bypasses potentially confounding personality traits. For example, his self-monitoring scale does not measure the same thing as does a scale designed to measure how Machiavellian people are (the cor-

relation is approximately -.17). In other words, a person who rates high on self- monitoring is not necessarily cynical or contemptuous of people. Perhaps more important, the scale is quite different from those designed to measure how much persons wish to act in ways that are socially desirable. Persons high on social desirability scales tend to be looking largely for social approval, but the need for social approval is not necessarily related to the ability to control self- presentation. (The correlation with one social desirability scale was -.19) Further, self-monitoring does not mean that a person is self- conscious. The difference, again, appears largely to be a manipulative component. Persons scoring high on a public self-consciousness scale tend to be awkward and often embarassed (For a review comparing several of these scales, see Fenigstein,1979; for a communication-related review of these scales, see Berger and Roloff,1980). The person high on self-monitoring, then, is rather manipulative but not awkwardly or cynically so. He does, however, pay attention to the social situations in which he finds himself in order to manipulate his own self-presentation. He manipulates his own self-presentation to create impressions he wants, but the impressions are not necessarily intended solely to make others like him.

It would seem that self-monitoring is a useful trait for journalists, but the manipulative aspect of self-monitoring may also hamper their assessments of sources. Journalists frequently are assessing why people take the actions that they do. The manipulative aspect of self-monitoring may mean that a journalist possessing a good deal of self-monitoring is preoccupied with the personalities of the sources he is dealing with, particularly the

manipulative aspects of the personalities of sources. This argument leads to a general self-monitoring hypothesis:

> The higher the self-monitoring, the greater the emphasis on personality as the primary cause of actions taken by sources.

The hypothesis has a corallary which is equally important for understanding self-monitoring:

> The higher the self-monitoring, the less the emphasis on situational aspects as the primary cause of actions taken by sources.

Contrasting personality with situation in attributing causes for actions presents several advantages. It links self-monitoring to general concepts which are important to journalists in assessing numerous events. It also links the study of self-monitoring to a large body of research in experimental psychology which in itself could be very useful in gaining a more systematic understanding of the processes and effects of interviewing.

There has been considerable research into ways in which individuals attribute causes to the actions of others. Research into attribution theory has turned up one rather general and robust result, called by one researcher the fundamental attribution error (Ross,1977). The error is that people tend to attribute a person's actions to his traits, characteristics or values, discounting or ignoring altogether the constraints imposed by the situation the person is in. For example, in an initial experiment students writing pro- Castro essays were rated as pro-Castro even though the raters knew that the students were told to write the pro-Castro essays as part of an exam. Furthermore, the raters them-

selves had also just completed an assignment in which they were forced to write an essay favoring or opposing Castro (Jones and Harris, 1964). In later experiments, misattribution occurred even though subjects witnessed that the constraints were imposed by the experimenter (Snyder and Jones, 1974; Ross, 1977; Jones, 1979). While there are exceptions and complications, (see Reeder and Brewer, 1979; Miller et al, 1981; Jones, 1979) the results have been quite consistent overall. Experimenters have found that misattribution is stable and quite persistent, even when the subjects in experiments have been presented strong evidence that their attributions are incorrect. (For a theoretical introduction, see Kelley, 1967. For excellent reviews, see Ross, 1977; and Kelley and Michela, 1980).

Attribution theory can be used as a baseline to gauge the effects of self-monitoring. Differences in self-monitoring may create differences in assessments journalists make. By linking self-monitoring with attribution theory, however, certain assessments can more certainly be identified as being biased rather than merely being different from others. At the same time, if the fundamental attribution error is in fact widespread, crossing many types of people and situations, then it is an error that journalists should carefully take into account in their work. However, in order to counteract errors of attribution, the conditions under which misattribution are most likely to occur must be clearly delineated. As a first step, it would seem important to study attributions made in the different conditions under which journalists gain information. More specifically, it would be important to study whether the act of questioning itself lessens the

tendency toward misattribution. Kelley and Michela (1980) in their review of attribution research state that a little explored question is: when do observations modify beliefs rather than observations being merely interpreted in light of beliefs? Clearly, this question is extremely important in understanding the role misattribution might play in journalism. Observations might be more likely to modify beliefs when the observations are the result of asking questions because by

framing questions persons entertain more seriously a variety of explanations for an action. By contrast, a person who is merely given the same information, say in the form of a press release or handout, is less likely to entertain different explanations, hence is more likely to fall back on commonly used explanations for actions. If attribution theory applies, the more common explanations involve discounting situational factors. The attribution hypothesis, then, is:

> Persons asking questions to gain information will, on average, put more stress on situational attributions and less stress on personality attributions than will persons who merely receive the same information.

The attribution hypothesis implies an experimental design in which the control group receives information in the form of handouts, and the experimental group gathers the same information through interviews. The effect of self-monitoring thus can be studied in both groups. In the experimental treatment, self-monitoring should be positively related to personality attributions and negatively related to situational attributions. Greater self-monitoring can lead to greater awareness of the characteristics of others. The

higher awareness of others will lead to a greater belief in personality rather than situational causes in making attributions concerning others.

The relationship of self-monitoring and attributions should be different in the control group. Two hypotheses seem plausible. One is that self-monitoring is engaged only during social situations, Hence the passive hypothesis is:

> When persons only read information about others, there is no relationship between self-monitoring and sitatuional or personality attributions.

The active hypothesis assumes that self-monitoring is always engaged, hence affects attributions made when persons read about situations.

> When persons only read information about others, the greater the self- monitoring, the stronger the situational attributions, and the weaker the personality attributions.

If self-monitoring is engaged while reading, then the greater the self-monitoring, the greater the effort to be aware of the individuality of the persons quoted or described. However, little manipulation can take place; there is little chance for action and reaction. Hence a person high in self- monitoring becomes sensitive to what others are saying, but cannot become particularly sensitive to their manipulative and active characteristics. If those high in self-monitoring gain a sense of personality largely through active manipulation, then through reading, they have little except a fairly acute sense of what the persons were quoted as saying about their own actions. Hence, the greater the self-monitoring, the greater the situational attribution.

Experimental Design and Procedures

The experiment was performed during a high school journalism institute, which was an intensive, two-week course. Students in the institute were assigned to different courses: one course was for reporters, another for experienced editors, still another for beginning editors. There were several sections within each course. Students were organized into small classes each having one or two teachers. Neither students nor teachers rotated. Each class met for approximately six hours per day. Often extra sessions were held during the evening. (The author was a team teacher in one of the classes.)

A questionnaire which served as a pre-test was filled out by all students during the first general meeting of the institute. The experiment itself was conducted near the end of the institute, partly to prevent students from connecting the pre-test with the experiment. The questionnaire included the questions making up the Self-Monitoring Scale. The questionnaire also asked students their opinions on issues relevant to the experiment itself.

The class structure of the institute made it extremely important to control for the effects of being in a particular class, and of having a particular teacher. Two steps were taken. First, the pre-test, which included the Self-Monitoring Scale, was answered by students during the first general meeting of the institute. The general meeting was held before the classes began. Second, those participating in the experiment itself were randomly assigned to the experimental or the control treatment. Whole classes were not assigned to one treatment or the other.

Randomly breaking up classes is necessary to minimize effects of being in a particular class; however, it raises another problem. Students can become suspicious; they may wonder why an unusual procedure is being followed. After consultation with the six teachers whose classes were involved in the experiment, it was decided to perform the experiment immediately after a general lecture. General lectures were held every day; teachers decided whether they wanted their class to attend. For one lecture, only classes involved in the experiment attended. Immediately after the lecture, students were told that they were to perform an important exercise: completing a story on deadline. Students were told that it was important to work on their own, and not to discuss the assignment until all had completed it. The teacher announcing the assignment then said that as part of the assignment, students would not return to their usual classes. Instead new classes would be formed for the assignment only. The teacher then read the names of students and the classroom they were to report to. Students left immediately after their names were read. The experimental group went to one classroom; the control group to another. There appeared to be little suspicion; students took the mixed classes as part of the assignment. Re-assigning students seemed to underline the idea that students were not to talk with one another. Students in the different treatment groups were not able to talk with one another until after the experiment was completed.

Considerable attention was paid to selecting a story that could be used by both the control and the experimental groups. Several criteria were used in selecting a story. The story had to

be realistic to the students. The story also had to be reasonably close to the students' lives so that they would not be overwhelmed by the feeling that they did not understand the story. At the same time, however, the structure of the story, the plot, needed to be similar to the structure of many political conflicts found in stories about local, state and federal government. The generality of the structure of the story would permit some ability to generalize the results, if only tentatively. Finally, the story had to provide some ambiguity as to the motivations of the persons involved such that the attribution of actions could be made to either the individual's personality traits or the individual's situation.

The story used comes from a real incident. The principal of a high school suspended several of the best students in the school for failing to attend mandatory pep rallies. The suspension occurred after the students had skipped several pep rallies. Students in both treatment groups received the following handout:

> Barbara Lake, a prize-winning member of the Debate Society, James McMurrin, president of the Drama Club and Dena Churley, photo editor of the yearbook, refused to attend mandatory pep assemblies and have been suspended for three days.
>
> Mary Alice Leary, principal of East High School, said that they had been warned repeatedly about their behavior. "I followed school policy and made sure the students received due process," she said.
>
> Pep rallies became mandatory two months ago at the beginning of basketball season.
>
> The rallies are scheduled at various times during the school day. They are monitored by all teachers who have regularly scheduled classes at that time.

When the pep assemblies were voluntary, very few students attended. Coaches and athletes and a group of parents called the Booster Club encouraged the idea that the pep rallies be made mandatory.

Several students protested the compulsory pep rallies and suggested that students be allowed to study in the library during the assemblies.

Their proposal was rejected. They boycotted the pep assemblies and urged others to do so. The protesters studied in the library or worked in classrooms of teachers who were not at the assemblies.

Donald Nelson, president of the Booster Club, said he believes school spirit can be the difference between a winning team and a losing team. His son is captain of the basketball team.

Students in the control treatment received three pages of comments from three persons involved in the situation. One page of comments came from the principal, another from the head of the booster club, and the third from one of the students. Those in the experimental treatment had to call the three sources. They were given telephone numbers, and could call from faculty offices. The persons acting as sources included graduate students, a high school teacher working in the institute, and undergraduates who were reporters and editors on the university newspaper. Students in the experimental treatment made their calls in any order that they could; the order depended largely on which source could be reached next. In the control treatment, the three pages with comments were handed out separately several minutes apart. The order was randomized for each student.

Extensive efforts were made to provide equivalent information to both the control and the experimental treatments. Prior to the

experiment, many of the persons who served as the sources in the experiment acted out telephone conversations. Many acted both as reporter and as source. Their comments were recorded, and served as one basis for the handouts in the control groups. In addition lists of possible questions were drawn up, and answers made up for the questions. Answers to anticipated questions also served as the basis for the handouts in the control group. Finally, those taking on each role were given the control-treatment handout along with the possible questions and answers, and were instructed to keep their answers as close to the handout as possible. It was felt that it would be better for the persons acting as sources to use their own words; otherwise their comments would be unrealistic. In addition, the interviews were tape recorded. Most were basically equivalent in content, although the same quotes were not used. In many instances the major difference was that reporters in the experimental treatment picked up information that was extraneous to the experiment such as the date of the pep assembly and the date when pep assemblies were made mandatory. (The handouts are reproduced in Appendix B.)

After students wrote their stories, they filled out a questionnaire that asked about their ideas and opinions about each of the actors in the story. Students were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 25 statements. Some statements said a person said and acted as he did because of the situation he found himself in. Other statements said a person acted as he did because of his own beliefs and his own personality. Students also were asked what they thought they would have done in the same situation, and how much freedom they thought they would have had

in deciding what to do.

Analysis of the Self-Monitoring Scale

Before testing the hypotheses, it is necessary first to analyze the characteristics of the Self-Monitoring Scale. It must be determined whether the 25 questions used to tap the concept of self-monitoring actually form a scale. As will be seen, the answer is somewhat complex.

An initial analysis of the 25 questions making up the Self-Monitoring Scale found that the scale was quite weak, at least for this sample of students. The reliability coefficient (the standardized alpha) for the entire scale was approximately .61. One detailed analysis found that a few of the questions seemed particularly weak or ambiguous. Another detailed analysis provided some clues that the scale might be made up of several small, related subscales. The subscales, however, may not tap different personality traits, but rather different situations in which self-monitoring might be manifested. In addition to the reliability analysis, factor analysis was used to study the scale. If it is truly one scale, a factor analysis should reveal one major factor which strongly relates most of the questions. A factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed three major factors, and also revealed that some of the questions failed to load clearly on any of the major factors. The results of the factor analysis suggested studying three separate subscales, which was done. One subscale was called the Modified Self-Monitoring scale because it seems to best capture the idea behind the original self-monitoring scale. The Modified Self-Monitoring

scale was constructed from the following questions:

My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

I guess I put on a show to entertain people.

I'm not always the person I appear to be.

In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different people.

The Modified Self-Monitoring scale has a standardized alpha of .70.

A second scale was labeled the Party Scale. The standardized alpha for the Party Scale is .69. The scale was made up of the following questions:

I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting.

At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going.

In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.

The third scale was called the the Actor Scale. The standardized alpha is .71. The scale was built from the following questions:

I would probably make a good actor.

I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.

I have considered being an entertainer.

The detailed analysis of the original scale also turned up one question which was highly ambiguous. The question was:

> I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite so well as I should.

One might argue that on the face of it, the question is ambiguous because it is really two potentially independent questions--I feel awkward in company, and I do not show up quite so well in company as I should. The ambiguity in the question showed up quite clearly in a detailed analysis: the question has a moderate positive correlation with the Modified Self-Monitoring scale, and a somewhat weaker negative correlation with the Party Scale.

The teenagers seem quite sensitive to the situations stated or implied in the questions, and this sensitivity may have weakened the effectiveness of the questions in tapping self-monitoring. Questions in each of the three subscales might be seen as actually tapping the same trait in different hypothetical situations. The most direct question can be found in the Modified Self-Monitoring Scale: "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different people." Questions that seem similar except for the emphasis on the situation are found in the Actor Scale and the Party Scale. "I would probably make a good actor", for example, and "I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting". The Actor Scale and the Party Scale have a correlation of .40. Their correlations with the Modified Self-Monitoring Scale are .08 and -.07 respectively.

While the factor analysis suggested the building of subscales, the gains in reliability were so small as to be practical-

ly negligible. The factor analysis did serve to isolate at least one ambiguous question, and to suggest why the original scale appeared rather weak. The information from the factor analysis, as well as information from various reliability tests, was used to build a Self-Monitoring Scale that used 18 of the original 25 questions. (See the Appendix A for a list of questions used and deleted.) The standardized alpha for this 18-question scale was .68, and the scale was found to be additive according to the Tukey test for additivity. The 18-item scale has a level of reliability virtually identical with the three subscales, and is far closer to the original Self-Monitoring Scale, a scale which was tested against other scales and was tested on a number of different types of individuals. It also is important to note that a reliability coefficient of .70 was reported by Snyder, who tested the scale on larger samples.(1) It would seem, therefore, that despite some problems with the scale, the results of the overall analysis would be most generalizable if the scale closest to the original scale were used. The 18-item scale will be used in the analysis, and will be called the Self-Monitoring Scale.

Several other scales were built in order to account for the individual experiences and opinions of each student. The pre-test included batteries of questions on sports, the student's principal, reporting and academics. Attitude toward the emphasis upon sports in the student's school made up one scale (the standardized alpha is .70, and the questions have been logged in order to make the scale additive.) Another scale has been formed on questions asking the student how nervous he is to interview adults and peers in person and on the telephone. The four ques-

tions form a scale with a standardized alpha of .82.(2)

As was mentioned, after writing their stories on the incident, students filled out a brief questionnaire on the incident. The dependent variables come from this questionnaire. Students were asked to respond to the following questions on a one-to- ten scale in which one is "disagree very strongly" and 10 is "agree very strongly":

> The principal made pep assemblies mandatory because she personally believes that they are a good thing for the school.
>
> The principal had complete freedom in deciding whether to suspend the students.
>
> The principal made the pep assemblies mandatory because she was being pressured by the Booster Club to do so.

The first two questions are designed to get at the principal's own traits as the cause of her actions. The third asks about the situation the principal was in. Questions tapping situation and personality were also asked concerning the students:

> The students protested because they really believed that pep assemblies are a waste of time.
>
> The students had complete freedom in deciding whether they would protest the pep assemblies.
>
> The students protested mainly because they felt that something had to be done to gain more school recognition of drama, debate, music and other activities.
>
> The students protested the mandatory pep assemblies because they found that the decisions made by the principal were so bad that something had to be done.
>
> The students who protested the assemblies were almost

forced to do so by the principal who made the assemblies mandatory.

The first three questions were meant to determine the extent to which the personalities and values of the students were the causes of their actions. The last two were meant to determine the extent to which their situation was the cause of their actions. The first statements will be called personality attributions, the second situational attributions. It is not assumed that cause must be only a matter of situation or only a matter of personality. Rather the questions are used to see if a shift in emphasis occurs.

Analysis: Tests of the Hypotheses

Multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses and simultaneously to control for various background influences that might be important.(3) In most cases, they were found to have little effect. In looking at the questions concerning the principal, two background variables were kept. A scale measuring anxiety about interviewing was found to be statistically significant. Students were also asked how much influence parents had on the principal of their high school. This variable was also found to be statistically significant. Both variables come from the pre-test. A scale measuring student perceptions of the emphasis on sports at his high school had no effect. On the pre-test, each student was asked the extent to which his principal made decisions entirely on his own, and the extent to which his principal was his own boss. These questions had no effect on the results, and were dropped from the analysis.

No background variables affected the results found for the questions concerning the suspended students. The post-test included questions about what the student felt he or she would do in the same situation. It is interesting to note that none of the questions affected the results. The students apparently were quite capable of separating their own personal reactions from their assessments of the students, certainly an encouraging clue that the students were in some ways acting professionally. Questions concerning emphasis on sports, and questions about interviewing and the principal also had no effect on the results.

Finally, two checks were run on the performance of the experiment itself. The experiment was run twice in one day. No differences were found for either set of students. Different actors were invovled during the two experimental runs. In addition, there were two sets of actors during each experimental run. No differences were found for the two sets of actors during either experimental run.

Results supported the attribution hypothesis and the active self-monitoring hypothesis. In no instance was support found for the passive self-monitoring hypothesis. Support for the other hypotheses, however, was not entirely consistent. When support was found for the self-monitoring hypotheses, the support was quite strong.(4) (The adjusted R-squared ranged from .16 to .31.) No significant results were found for two of the five statements concerning students, and no significant results were found for one of the statments concerning the principal. For two of the student attributions, support was found for the attribution hypothesis only. Support for the attribution hypothesis was found in five

statements, support for the active self-monitoring hypothesis in three of those five. Both the active self-monitoring hypothesis and the attribution hypothesis were supported by the following statements:

> The principal made the pep assemblies mandatory because she was being pressured by the Booster Club to do so.
>
> The principal made pep assemblies mandatory because she personally believes that they are a good thing for the school.
>
> The students protested the mandatory pep assemblies because they found that the decisions made by the principal were so bad that something had to be done.

Support for the attribution hypothesis only was found for two statements:

> The students protested mainly because they felt that something had to be done to gain more school recognition of drama, debate, music and other activities.
>
> The students had complete freedom in deciding whether they would protest the pep assemblies.

The statement that the principal had complete freedom in deciding to suspend the students failed to produce any significant experimental results. Perhaps the reason is that the statement is ambiguous in regard to the principal. Perhaps she is seen as having freedom because of her position of authority, but is still seen as being open to pressure from parents and others. A statement concerning students may also have been ambiguous. No results were found for the statement that students were "almost forced" by the principal to protest the assemblies. The statement was intended to get at situational attributions. However, it may be

that some students saw it as tapping personality as a cause because only certain types of persons would see the principal as forcing them to disobey her own rules. Other students may have been puzzled and taken the word "forced" too literally. A second statement concerning students probably had only one clear answer. The statement said students protested because they thought the pep assemblies were a waste of time. Agreement on this statement was very high in both groups.

TABLE 1
Assessment of the Principal:
Regression of Attribution Variables on Experimental Treatment and Self-Monitoring Controlling for Background Variables.

	Personality (favors assemblies)	Situation (pressured by club)
Interviewing Anxiety	.155	-.262
Attrib. to own Principal's Personality	.055	-.278
Experimental Treat.	-1.69	.918
Self-Monitoring	- .56	.257
Interaction: Exp. Treat by Self-Monitoring	2.07	-1.30
Adjusted R-squared	.253	.312
Significance, R-squared	.000	.000
Number of subjects	67	67

(In both instances, the interaction term contributes significantly to the explained variance. For the control group, the slope of the line between self-monitoring and the dependent variable is the number listed for self-monitoring. For the experimental group number, the slope is the control group number plus the number for the interactive term.)

TABLE 2
Assessment of the Students:
Regression of Attribution Variables on Experimental Treatment and Self-Monitoring

	Personality (freedom)	Personality (recognition)	Situation (bad decision)
Experimental Treat.	-.255	-.262	1.10
Self-Monitoring	n.s.	n.s.	.431
Interaction: Exp. Treat. and S-M.	n.s.	n.s.	-1.47
Adjusted R-squared	.051	.075	.161
Significance, R-Squared	.033	.013	.002
Number of Subjects	67	67	67

(The first personality question is: The students had complete freedom in deciding whether to protest the pep assemblies. The second is: The students protested mainly because they felt something had to be done to gain more school recognition of drama, debate, music and other activities. The situation question is: The students protested the mandatory pep assemblies because they found that the decisions made by the principal were so bad that something had to be done.)

Discussion

Results from the experiment portray interviewing as a complex balance of different psychological factors. Interviewing can reduce bias toward situational factors as causal agents, but it appears that the greater the self-monitoring on the part of the interviewer, the less the emphasis placed on situational factors as causal agents. The results provide tentative support for guidelines that could be of use to student journalists, and perhaps working journalists also.

It does appear that there is a systematic relationship

between a personality trait and the assessment of the motivations of sources. The relationship can be seen as an ironic one. While this experiment did not study the relationship between self-monitoring and the quality of the interview itself, it is plausible that self-monitoring is a trait of importance to journalistic interviewing. It seems reasonable to say that persons who are higher in self-monitoring will overall do better at interviewing. The irony is that the higher the self-monitoring, the more likely the interviewer will make attributions that are biased. However, being aware of bias is a start toward controlling it. Self-monitoring can be used as a basis for discussing who might make certain biases in attributions and why. Self-monitroing can also be used as a basis for discussing why different persons might reach different conclusions about sources and why. Journalists work in a highly manipulative environment; often the journalist is more manipulated than manipulating. Hence an understanding of self- monitoring could be of real use to starting journalists. The idea of self-monitoring could help them understand manipulative techniques used by both sources and interviewers. More important, in the long run, the idea of self-monitoring could help students understand when their judgments are clouded by their own personal values and experiences. An understanding of self-monitoring could help students see that some of their conclusions are based not on the information they received, but the processes they went through to get the information. Distinguishing between the processes and the results could lead to a better understanding of political processes and sources. It might also lead some journalism students to gain a greater appreciation for social structure and organizational procedures as sources of news. Dis-

cussion of self-monitoring and bias could lead, in other words, to discussions about the importance of situational causes.

Students could also consider why attributions might differ depending upon how the information is gathered. Several implications stem from the experimental result that attributions can be different depending upon whether the information is gathered through reading or through interviewing. The important point is that the difference seems to arise even if the information gathered is essentially the same. The general point remains: the conclusions students reach depend partly upon their personalities, and partly upon the ways in which they gathered the information rather than the information itself. Discussion of reading versus interviewing is complicated because the differences are also overlaid by the dynamic of self-monitoring. However, setting self-monitoring aside for the time being, several implications concerning attributions can be outlined.

One implication is that students must be careful in writing their stories because readers or listeners might well fall into the same patterns. Students might want to present the situational aspects carefully and clearly so that readers might be inclined to give them more weight. Of course, situational aspects should not be distorted to give them too much weight. Also, if students emphasize them too much, they might be considered as being too sympathetic to their sources.

Second, the difference between interviewing and reading might help illuminate perennial arguments among reporters and copy editors and editors. Many of the students in the experiment are

editors of student papers. The results imply that editors might be inclined to weight personalities more than situations--at least compared to their reporters. Editors, therefore, might be more inclined to push explanations based on personalities, and the inclination might get stronger the less direct contact with the sources the editors have. The experimental results might provide a warning to editorial page writers as well. Often persons on the editorial page do not directly interview those they talk about. The implication from this study is that editorial writers would be more inclined to base their conclusions on attributions of cause to personality traits and values than to situational aspects. Again, it is a matter of balance, but the experiment hints that editorial writers should be aware of the bias and should attempt to take it into account. It is not clear that the experiment implies that editors and editorial writers should get out and interview more often, although that would not necessarily be wrong. The experiment does indicate, however, that those not having direct contact should be aware of a tendency to bias explanations toward personality traits, and should work to counter-act the bias.

Conclusion

The experiment provides some evidence for a strong and complex relationship between self-monitoring as a personality trait and biases in the kinds of conclusions student journalists make about the reasons why sources act as they do. The results of the experiment can be used to help students understand how they can separate the information they receive from the processes of gathering the information. Such a distinction seems important in making assessments about sources. By using two bodies of research

in psychology, some clues as to the effects of interviewing were uncovered, effects that could be of use in teaching high school journalists.

Footnotes

(1) Snyder asked persons to disagree or disagree with statements. In this experiment, students were asked respond to each statement on a 10-point scale with one being "very strongly disagree" and 10 being "very strongly agree."

(2) The questions were logged to make the scale as was suggested by Tukey's test for additivity.) (The questions in both scales were logged basically because, as might be expected, very few students said that sports were not important in their school, and very few saic that they were nervous during interviews. Logging the scales reduces the impact of the few students that gave unusual answers. The few unusual answers distorts the construction of a scale, and can ultimately produce misleading results. The Modified Self-Monitoring Scale uses logged variables as does the Party Scale. Decisions to use logged scales were based on the Tukey test for additivity. Logging, incidentally, does not alter the rank order of students on any scale. For an introduction to the transformation of scales, see Hull and Nie, 1981. For a lengthy and complex discussion, see Tukey, 1977.

(3) Prior to the analyses, however, scales were checked to determine if they met various statistical assumptions. The standard deviation and skew of each scale and question used was compared across the experimental treatment. Of particular concern was the skewness of some questions. If the skewness differed across the treatments, then the variable was transformed until the skew was reduced substantially. Thus, while many variables are not reported in the original units, the variables do meet statistical assumptions, a requirement which seems particularly imoortant given the small sample size. In all instances, standardized beta weights are reported for this reason. Standardized beta weights are also less prone to distortion when the independent variables are correlated. For discussion of transformation, see Tukey (1977); for discussion of the robustness of beta weights, see Hanushek and Jackson (1977).

(4) Various scatterplots were checked to see if outliers were creating the results, particularly the strong interactions. In some cases possible outliers were identified. They were removed and the analyses run again. No real differences were found. Analyses reported include all valid cases.

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Appendix A

The following questions were used to make up the Self-Monitoring Scale. The questions come from Snyder (1974). Students were asked to mark on a one-to-10 scale how much they agreed with each statement. One was marked as "very strongly disagree" and 10 was marked as "very strongly agree". The letter R after a question indicates that it must be reversed before being added into a the Self-Monitoring Scale.

I would probably make a good actor.

In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention. (R)

I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people. (R)

I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.

I have considered being an entertainer.

If it is for a good purpose, I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face.

My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. (R)

I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. (R)

When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going. (R)

I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.

Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time.

I'm not always the person I appear to be.

In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different people.

I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.

I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. (R)

I would not change my opinions or the way I do things in order to please someone else or win their favor. (R)

I am not particularly good at making other people like me. (R)

The following questions suggested by Snyder (1974) were omitted because of the results of factor analyses or analyses of scale reliability:

I can only argue for ideas which I already believe. (R)

I rarely need the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music. (R)

I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite so well as I should. (R)

At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. (R)

I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am.

In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect of me to be rather than anything else.

I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone.

Appendix B

Handouts given to the control group.

In a telephone interview, the principal said:

"Athletics is an important part of the program we have to develop the whole person. These student athletes spend many hours working hard to represent the school and the students. They train for months and give up a lot to bring a sense of pride and honor to the school.

"Athletic achievement is appreciated by the parents in the community. The parents and others are interested in the records of the teams, and like everybody they respond to winners. With the support they provide in taxes and bond issues, it seems reasonable that the student body should show its support at pep assemblies. The Booster Club is most supportive of the school. The teams play for the school, and they deserve support from all the students.

"I think debate, drama and journalism are very important to our program. Frankly, neither students nor the community is as interested in those as they are in basketball. This is just a fact of life we have to accept.

"Besides, attending a pep rally is not going to hurt anyone, and it shows the players that the student body appreciates what sacrifices the athletes have made. This school is part of the community, and I must be responsive to the community. Parents are vitally interested in a strong sports program."

In a telephone interview, the student in the Debate Society said:

"We're not denying athletes give up a lot and work hard. Many students in drama, choir, band, student government, the newspaper and many other activities give up a lot, too. They don't get the recognition the athletes do. No one is required to attend any of those other things.

"The only reason they made the pep rallies mandatory is because very few attended when they weren't. Jocks have huge egos that need to be fed. They do what they do from free choice-- and that's all we're asking. I don't see any reason why I can't study in the library rather than being forced into a situation I really don't like. If others want to go to pep rallies, that's fine. I have friends who go and like them. I also have friends who don't like debate, and I don't want anyone to force them to listen to

me.

"I see no scholastic value in singing silly songs, yelling silly cheers or stomping feet and clappin hands. I would rather do something else I consider worthwhile. School is primarily an academic institution. In a democratic country, no one should be forced to participate in an inane pep assembly.

"How would you like to be forced to go to a play or watch a chess tournament or have to buy a yearbook? All of those students work hard,too. They don't have a Booster Club for them, though."

In a telephone interview, the president of the Booster Club said:

"After all the time and energy these kids put in for the school, they deserve all the recognition they can get. I can't believe after all the players have given to the school that any student wouldn't want to repay them with a heck of a lot of spirit to boost them.

"Members of the Booster Club are 100 percent behind our athletic program, and we've shown our enthusiasm by getting out the vote for bond issues. If those singers, talkers and picture takers can't get out there on the court where it counts, the least they can do is cheer on those who have the guts to play ball. Those brain-types may find later there is no money to pay all those artsy teachers if the parents vote against tax increases.

"When I talked to the principal, I made her aware of how much effort my son and his teammates put into basketball and how much the Booster Club is behind them.

"Even if my son weren't on the team, I'd still feel the same. Sports is important. It's not just me. All the parents in the Booster Club are willing to support the school, so it's only fair the student body should support the athletes. A pep assembly with the band playing and the pom-pom girls and the cheerleaders is only fitting.